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NEGRO SONGS AND FOLK-LORE

BY MARY WALKER FINLEY SPEERS

I. WHO BUILT DE AHK?

THE following rhymes seem to be known by Virginia, Washington (D. C.), and Maryland negroes. The air is accompanied with patting and shuffling of the hands and feet and a swaying motion of the body of those "wrapping him or her up" (as they term it) that can best be compared with the swaying motion of the head of a caged bear. Every few moments one of the "wrappers" will jump upwards of a foot, and cry, "Ah, Lawd!" or "Wrap hit hup, wrap hit hup!" or "Cum toe hit, boys! cum toe hit!" And they will keep this up until you wonder that both the "wrappers" and the dancers do not collapse from exhaustion. Finally they are "spelled" by another bunch of darkies; but, as soon as the first set are able, they start in again.

*Chorus*

Uh! whoo built de ahk?  
 Brudder No-rah, No-rah.  
 Uh! who built de ahk?  
 Brudder No-rah built de ahk.

1. "Say, Mistah Rabbutt,  
 W'at makes yoe head so ball?"  
 "Glory be toe Gaud,  
 Iah bin er buttin' thoo de wall."  
*Cho.* En, uh! whoo built de ahk? etc.
2. "Say, Mistah Rabbutt,  
 W'at makes yoe eyes so big?"  
 "Glory be toe Gaud,  
 I bin er wearin' fals' wig."  
*Cho.* Sez, uh! whoo built de ahk? etc.
3. "Say, Mistah Rabbutt,  
 W'at makes yoe nose so flat?"  
 "Er Glory be toe Gaud,  
 I'se bin cot in er trap."  
*Cho.* En, etc.
4. "Say, Mistah Rabbutt,  
 W'at makes yoe teeth so sharp?"  
 "Er Glory be toe Gaud,  
 I've bin cuttin' caun top."  
*Cho.* Sez, etc.

5. "Say, Mistah Rabbutt,  
W'at makes yoe sides so thin?"  
"Er Glory be toe Gaud,  
Deze bin er skeetin' thoo de win'."  
*Cho. En, etc.*
6. "Say, Mistah Rabbutt,  
W'at makes yoe legs so long?"  
"Glory be toe Gaud,  
Deze bin hung hon 'rong."  
*Cho. Sez, etc.*
7. "Say, Mistah Rabbutt,  
W'at makes yoe nails so long?"  
"Glory be toe Gaud,  
Deze bin diggin' hup caun."  
*Cho. En, etc.*
8. "Say, Mistah Rabbutt,  
W'at makes yoe cote so brown?"  
"Glory be toe Gaud,  
Hits humble toe de groun'."  
*Cho. Sez, etc.*
9. "Say, Mistah Rabbutt,  
W'at makes yoe tail so w'ite?"  
"Glory be toe Gaud,  
I keeries hit outer site."  
*Cho. En, etc.*

## II. DERE IS NO HIDIN' PLACE DOWN YHAR

### *Chorus*

I-ah run ter de rock fer ter hider maw face,  
De rock cry out, "No hidin' place," —  
Dere is no hidin' place down yhar,  
Dere is no hidin' place down yhar.

1. O-oo sinner man, sittin' on de gates ub yhell, —  
Dere is no hidin' place down yhar, —  
O-oo sinner man, sittin' on de gates ub yhell, —  
Dere is no hidin' place down yhar, —  
O-oo sinner man sittin' on de gates ub yhell,  
De gates floo open, en de sinner man fell,  
Dere is no hidin' place down yhar.

*Cho.*

2. Halli-lu-jah! Dere is no hidin' place down yhar.  
I run ter de rock fer ter hider maw face,  
De rock cry out, "Dere is no hidin' place," —  
Dere is no hidin' place down yhar,  
Dere is no hidin' place down yhar.  
Halli-lu-jah! Dere is no hidin' place down yhar.

*Cho.*

3. O-oo who's ober yhondar dress' in w'ite?  
Dere is no hidin' place down yhar —  
O-oo who's ober yhondar dress' in w'ite?  
Dere is no hidin' place down yhar —  
O-oo who's ober yhondar dress' in w'ite?  
De Chilluns ob Eez-reel, er Eez-reellites.

*Cho.*

4. O-oo who's ober yhondar dress' in red?  
No hidin' place down yhar —  
O-oo who's ober yhondar dress' in red?  
Er no hidin' place down yhar —  
O-oo who's ober yhondar dress' in red?  
De Chilluns ober Eez-reel er Mozess led —  
Dere is no hidin' place down yhar.

*Cho.*

5. O-oo hush, ole Annie, don't schew run, —  
Dere is no hidin' place down yhar, —  
O-oo hush, ole Annie, don't schew run, —  
Dere is no hidin' place down yhar, —  
O-oo hush, ole Annie, don't schew run,  
Des er wait en seed w'at de light'nin' done,  
Dere is no hidin' place down yhar.

*Cho.*

6. Ob all 'lig-gins I refress, —  
Dere's no hidin' place down yhar, —  
Ob all 'lig-gins I refress, —  
Dere is no hidin' place down yhar, —  
O-b al-l 'lig-gins I refress,  
I-ah do confer de Med-o-des.  
Dere is no hidin' place down yhar.

*Cho.*

7. I-ah do belief widout er doubt, —  
Dere is no hidin' place down yhar, —

I-ah do belief widout er doubt, —  
 No hidin' place down yhar —  
 I-ah do belief widout er doubt  
 Dat de Creeschins hev er right ter shout.  
 Dere is no hidin' place down yhar.

*Cho.*

8. Sis' Maery hez er golden chain, —  
 Dere is no hidin' place down yhar —  
 Sis' Maery hez er golden chain, —  
 Ah! No hidin' place down yhar, —  
 Sis' Maery hez er golden chain,  
 En ebry link iz jis de same.  
 Dere is no hidin' place down yhar.

### III

The following tale was told to me by both a Maryland and a Virginian negro. The supposed original name of the dog was "Mayship," which, as it seems to me, must be a corruption of "Makeshift."

HOW MISTAH MAYSHIP CUM TER BAHK, EN HAB TRIMMIN' 'ROUN' HIS  
 MOUF, EN HOW CUZIN RABBIT'S TAIL GOT WYTE

Mistah Rabbit, in de olden times, cood whisel same ez er man; en yeah 'e cum er whisellin' down de road wif 'is han's in 'is paukets. Mr. How-oon' 'e cum 'long tow en sez, "Look yeah, Cuzin Rabbit, wa't makes I can't whisel same like chew?" Den Cuzin Rabbit sez, "Oh! y'us moufs tow big, get me a needle en hy'll sew hit hup fer yus 'viding yer dues ez hy'll tell yer." So Mr. Mayship 'e goes en gits de needle en tred fer 'im, en Cuzin Rabbit 'e sews hit hup. "Now," 'e sez, "yus wait twill I gits hup on yhondah hill fer yer whisels." So Mr. Mayship 'e waits twill Cuzin Rabbit gits hup dah, er dues, den tries ter whisel, en Mr. Rabbit 'e sits hup dah ar laurfin' twill 'is sides near erbout ter bus', en Mr. Mayship 'e don't do a thing en dis blessed world, but gis try ter open hup 'is mouf, en sez "woof, woof, woof!" en dat's how de dog 'menced ter bahk. En 'e keeps hon a tryin' so hard dat 'e broke de stitches en dey tore does er ragged places in 'is mouf. Dat w'ats makes der trim'in' dat 's dere, — sorter kind ub lace, — dat flappy part wid de pints er roun' ub de dog's mouf. Yus des teck notice nex' time yus sees er dog, honey, en yer 'll see w'at I 'se tryin' ter 'splain ter yer.

Well den, Mr. Mayship 'e took arter Mr. Rabbit, en Mr. Rabbit took arter de briar patch, en der dey wuz dez ez Cuzin Rabbit got ter de briar patch, en wuz er gwin thoo de fence, Mr. Mayship wuz so hard on 'im en uz yelpin' al de tim, 'case 'es mouf wuz hertin' 'im so, dat w'en Mr. Mayship got ter de fence 'e gist cautch paht ub Cuzin

Rabbit's tail en bit hit clean short off, en dat Cuzin Rabbit wuz skeered so bad, dat de piece ub tail dat 'e hab left, done turn w'ite, en dat's why Mr. Rabbit's call de; "Cotton Tail" een 's skeered w'en 'e yearhs dem How-oons er yelpin'.

EARLEIGH HEIGHTS ON SEVERN,  
MARYLAND.